

NEWS from



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BOARD O.K.'s POSTMUS REQUEST TO JOIN OAK HILLS RESIDENTS' ACTION TO RE-OPEN RAILROAD CROSSING

Board Also Authorizes Postmus Objection to BLM Settlement

SAN BERNARDINO--The San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors today approved a request by First District Supervisor Bill Postmus to join an action filed earlier this month by Oak Hills residents seeking the re-opening of the Summit Truck Trail railroad crossing. The action being sought is an order from the California Public Utilities Commission.

"It was brought to my attention that the November closing of this crossing by the railroad has resulted in five- to seven-minute delays of County Fire units responding to emergency calls," Postmus said.

"This issue is not merely one of residents' convenience--it's a public safety issue. I believe our responsibility to ensure rapid emergency response outweighs any other concerns the railroad has cited in justifying its action."

On November 1, 2000, the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Company constructed a locked gate across Summit Truck Trail Crossing, which is a dirt access road to the south from Oak Hills through Summit Valley and ending at Highway 138. Reports of an apparent previous train collision with a car at that point may have contributed to the railroad's decision, County officials said.

The road is not a County road, nor a County-maintained road. However, because the road has been used by County Fire and other agencies for emergency services to Oak Hills, the Railway Company has provided them combination-lock access to the gate.

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SUMMIT TRUCK TRAIL

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County Fire Battalion Chief Dennis Felgar has indicated that having to use the locks has delayed rescue crews between five to seven minutes.

A group of residents retained the law firm of Brunick, Alvarez and Battersby on January 4, 2001, to file a complaint with the Public Utilities Commission (PUC), seeking an injunction to temporarily re-open the road, and determine that it should be permanently be reopened for public access.

Letters of support have previously been filed in the proceeding by County Battalion Chief Dennis Felgar, Assemblyman Phil Wyman, the City of Hesperia, and Supervisor Postmus.

"The message we're sending is that the residents aren't out there alone and that the County is seeking the best alternative for their safety," Postmus said.

The action was approved during a closed-session discussion during which ongoing legal issues are addressed by the Board. In other legal news from the Board, the Supervisors unanimously approved another request by Supervisor Postmus to file a friend-of-the-court (amicus) objection to an impending settlement between the federal Bureau of Land Management and an environmental coalition in Federal Court in San Francisco.